

The
TROUBLES

of
TOMAS

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A collection of one-act plays for children

by

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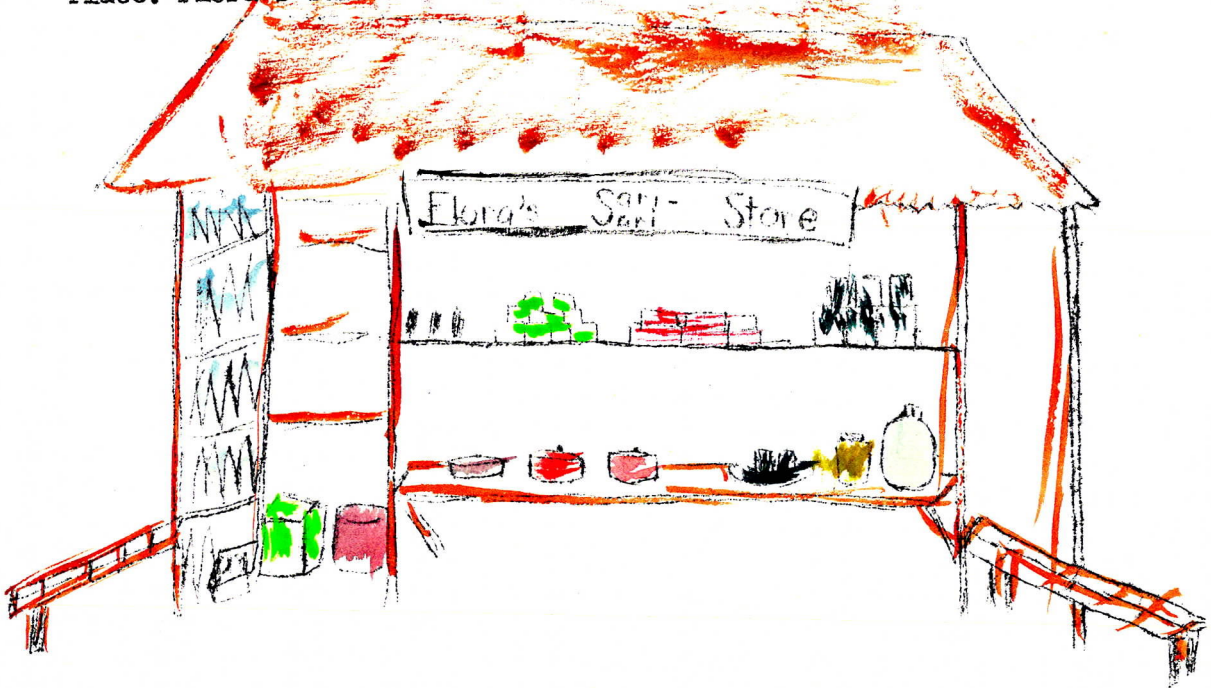
THE TROUBLES OF TOMAS

Characters:

Tomas Granada
Digos Pelinio (Digs), best friend
Narcisso Bersaluna, worst enemy
Lim, town merchant
Isiong Granada, father of Tomas
Teodoro Bersaluna, elementary school teacher
Apolinario Amora, barrio tenente
Father Castro
Flora Pelinio, sari-sari storekeeper
Inday Berou, a tomboy
Lolita Sacati, barrio girl
Serapion Miana, landowner
Gregorio Bernaldez, landowner
Tim Lim, a friend
Tony Berou, a friend
Pedi Peligrino, a friend
Sotero Luna, a friend
Ramie, Ale and Pesiang Granada, brother and sisters
Benito, a poor fool
Old Grandmother

Time: Present

Place: Flora's sari-sari store in Barrio Canacot



FIRE IN THE RICE FIELD

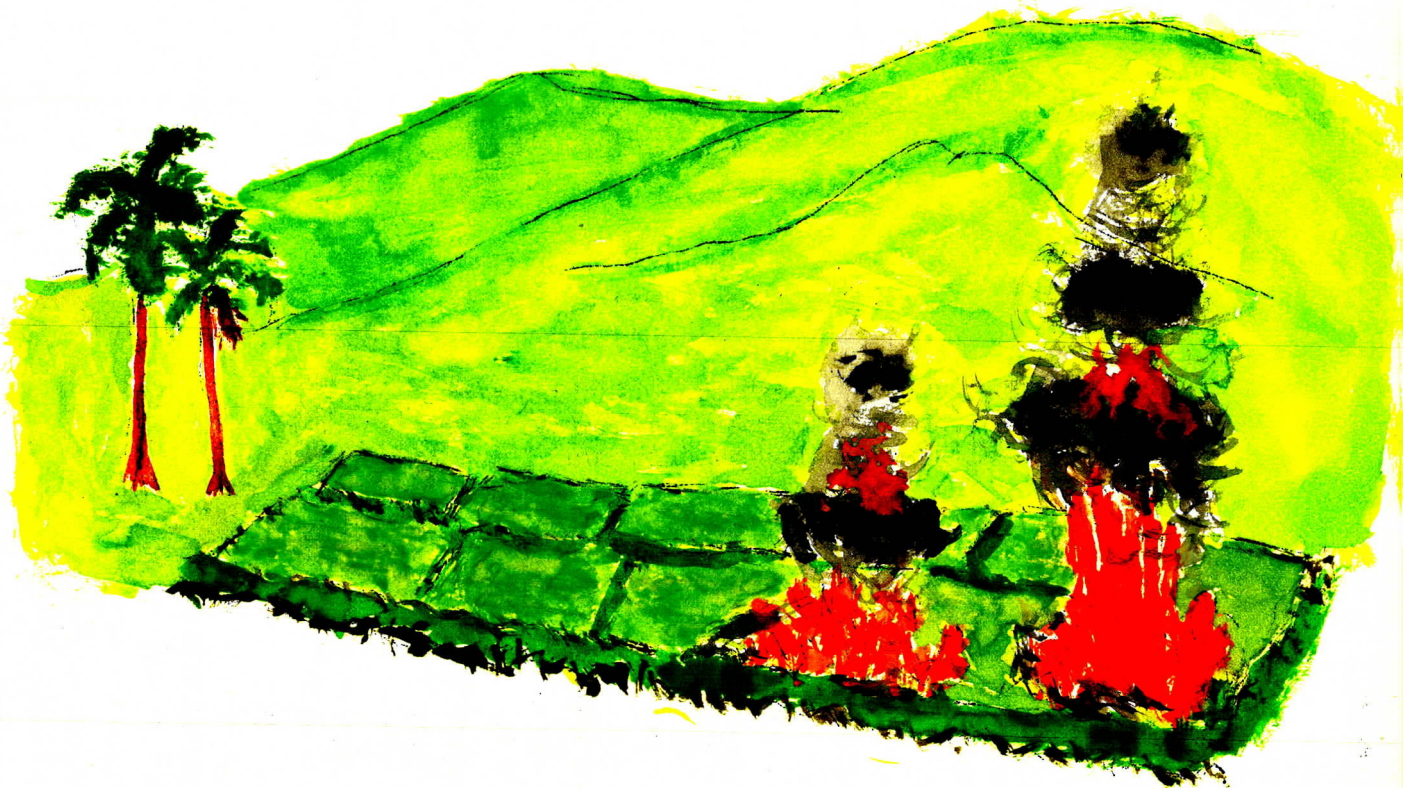
- TOMAS: My name is Tomas Granada. I'm fifteen years old. I don't like being fifteen years old. Sus, I can't catch butterflies anymore because I'm too old. And I can't be a boxer because I'm too young. There's nothing to do in this barrio.
- DIGUS: (sitting down in front of Flora's) Hey, Toms, let's go into Central. There's a cockfight this afternoon.
- TOMAS: Whose cocks, Digs?
- DIGUS: Tenente Amora's old fighter is one. Narcisso is betting his father's tough bird against everyone.
- TOMAS: (not noticing Narcisso approaching) Ah, Narcisso doesn't know anything about the cocks.
- NARCISSO: I heard that, Toms. I'll split your head with a bolo.
- TOMS: (picking up bamboo stick) Come over here and talk louder with your boasts.
- (Ale and Pesiang run up to the boys)
- ALE: Toms, Digs, Narcisso, hurry. Old Benito has run amok—he's burning the rice fields of Serapion Miana. The whole harvest will be lost.
- NARCISSO: I'm glad to hear that, Ale. Miana takes 50% of my father's harvest. Let's see how he likes being hungry for once.
- (Tomas walks around in front of the store with hands in pockets, thinking)
- TOMAS: My father Isiong gives 50% also. But think of all that rice burning. Our barrio will suffer, not Serapion Miana. He has many coconut trees. Better to fight him with my fists for his meanness than let rice burn. (whistles) Come on, Digs, let's round up the boys.
- (Tony, Sotero, Tim and Pedie appear)
- NARCISSO: Oh, look at all the brave fire fighters running off to save Miana's rice. I know he will thank all of you by taking 60% next year for the rice he is losing today.

TIM: Go to your cockfight, Narcisso. (to Tomas) Toms, there's an artesian well near the fields, by the junction road. Your sisters can bring pails and bottles.

TONY: I don't know why we're helping that mean old man but if you say so, Toms, we'll go.

TOMS: Alright now, let's go.

NARCISSO: (shouts after them) May the heat of the fire blacken you into Negritos.



Fire in the Rice Field

(There is a big group in front of Flora's
discussing all the details of the fire)

FLORA: So, Mr. Miana, your rice is safe.

MIANA: Safe? I lost half a hectare!

FLORA: But you might have lost everything.

MIANA: Flora, your tongue does not speak in intelligent
phrases. If there was no fire, I would have lost
nothing.

FATHER CASTRO:

Now, Serapion, the devil makes your mind twisted.
You should thank God you saved two-thirds of the
rice. The boys here should get your thanks.

MIANA: Hah! They probably started the fire themselves.

TOMAS: Buang ka! Old Benito started the fire and you know
it. Why should we start the fire and then put
it out?

MIANA: Why? You boys always go around making trouble
everywhere. You have nothing to do. Remember last
year, Tomas, when you and your friends gave tuba
to my chickens. You're always playing games.

TOMAS: What should we do with our time, Mr. Miana? We
have helped our fathers in the fields. We are
waiting for the rice to be ready for harvesting.

DIGUS: Do you have jobs for us, Mr. Miana?

MIANA: Jobs? Of course not. There aren't any.

FATHER: May I gently remind you, Serapion, that the
Tenente had made plans with the barrio council
last year to start a small carpentry business.

MIANA: So?

FATHER: The council came to you for money but you refused.
These boys could have learned a trade.

MIANA: Ah, they would quit in a week!

TOMS: We would not!.

FATHER: Why don't you give them a chance?

FLORA: Serapion, melt that ice cube you have for a heart and take out the pesos you have frozen there. You have taken the hard work of their fathers for years. It is time now to give their sweat back to the sons.

MIANA: But...

FATHER: God does not want greedy men wandering through heaven.

MIANA: (throwing up his arms in surrender) Ah, you are all against me. What can I do? Tell Tenente Amora that we can go into the city on Thursday to make the arrangements.

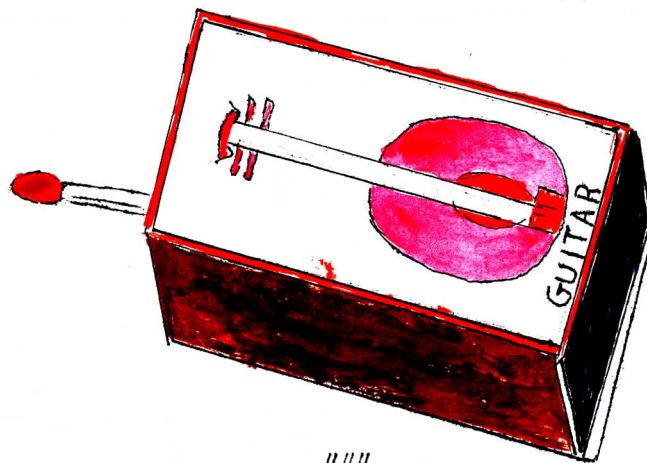
(Everybody cheers)

TOMS: Flora, I will buy you a whole case of San Miguel!

DIGUS: I know what I'll buy with my first paycheck.

TOMAS: What, Digs?

DIGUS: A big box of matches for Old Benito.



A CHICKEN THIEF

(Tenente Amora is speaking to a group in front of Flora's)

TENENTE: Friends, we have to do something about this chicken stealing. For three nights, chickens have been stolen from Tim Lim's father...

BERNALDEZ: Why haven't any chickens been stolen from other people's yards, Tenente?

NARCISSEO: Better to steal from the Chinese than from poor Filipinos.

TIM LIM: Hoy, Narcisseo, you have no right to say that.

NARCISSEO: (grabbing Tim's arm) I don't like you. Your father robs us of our pesos.

WOMAS: (pushing Narcisseo away) Stop, Narcisseo. Tim Lim is not your match. Fight me instead. (They begin to push and fight each other).

TEODORO

BERSALUNA: Wait, now, both of you. This is not the Araneta. You don't get paid for blackening your eyes with fists.

BERNALDEZ: Teo, boys don't settle things in Canacot in the classroom manner with words.

TEO: Gorio Bernaldez, you like a good fight too well.

BERNALDEZ: What else can I do for pleasure? I'm too old to fight myself.

TENENTE: Never mind, never mind. We're talking about chicken stealing, not boxing. Tim, how many chickens have been taken?

TIM: Four, tenente. My father is now building a pen so the chickens cannot wander and be caught.

BERNALDEZ: Ah, it is hard to catch a chicken thief, Tenente. Lim will have to watch out for himself.

TIM: But my father needs help, Tenente. He is too old to chase thieves.

NARCISSEO: And you are too weak and afraid to show your face.

DIGUS: Why can't you be quiet, Narcisso?

NARCISSEO: Hah! Lim is now feeding some poor Filipino family whose credit is no longer good at his store, only he's not doing it gracefully.

TOMAS: Perhaps you are talking about your family, Narcisso?

NARCISSEO: (jumps toward Tomas) I'll break your head...

TEO: (comes between them) Now, stop. We can organize a committee who would watch the Lim house at night. Each member could stay one hour until the next took over. I offer my shotgun.

TENENTE: And who will be on this committee? I am too busy with more important things. I can't stay up all night. How about you, Bernaldez?

BERNALDEZ: And who will watch my house? Ask Miana.

TENENTE: You know Serapion doesn't like the Chinese.

INDAY: Why does everyone hate the Chinese?

NARCISSEO: Inday, your mouth is always open.

INDAY: So I can bite you better, Narcisso.

TENENTE: Now, now, no one hates the Chinese. It's just that they have taken many opportunities away from Filipinos.

TIM: But before my grandfather came, there was no store like his where people could buy many things.

BERNALDEZ: There would have been one someday.

INDAY: When?

BERNALDEZ: Don't ask so many questions, Inday.

TEO: To get back to our problem, I will volunteer for one hour tonight. Who else will volunteer?

TOMAS: We will, sir.

TEO: Ah, no, Tomas, you are yet young. This is a man's work.

TOMAS: I am a man!

NARCISSEO: Ho, ho.

DIGUS: He's more of a man than you.

NARCISSEO: Be quiet, bakla!

TEO: Will no one volunteer?

TIM: What can my father do if you don't help?

TENENTE: I'm sorry, Tim, the farmers need to sleep. You know the harvesting has begun. Your father will have to help himself.

(Tomas pulls Tim away from the group)

TOMAS: I will come tonight, Tim. Pedie, Tero, Tony, Digs and I will keep the watch.

TIM: But your father won't let you go.

TOMAS: Never mind. I can slip out when everybody is sleeping.

TIM: He'll whip you if he finds out.

TOMAS: If he does, well, I won't cry.

TIM: Thanks, Tomas.

TOMAS: Don't mention it. You're my friend and your father is okay, too, even if he is Chinese. See you later.



(Digus is keeping watch in Lim's yard. He does not feel very brave. He jumps at every sound, but sees nothing. Finally, Tomas comes up behind him and whispers in his ear)

TOMAS: Digs, are you alright?

DIGUS: Sure, Toms, sure.

TOMAS: Have you seen anything?

DIGUS: Nothing.

TOMAS: Better go home. It's my turn, now.

DIGUS: Will you be okay?

TOMAS: Of course. Now, go on, before your father finds you missing.

DIGUS: I'll be going.

TOMS: So long.

(Tomas waits behind a tree. He does not see a figure creeping up behind him. The shadow of a man comes out of the darkness. A long object is raised over Toms' head. The stranger, however, steps on a twig. Tomas turns quickly, avoiding the blow, and begins to wrestle his attacker. They wrestle in silence for a few moments until finally the attacker is brought down by Tomas. A light appears as the elder Lim comes down to find out what all the noise is about.)



LIM: What's this? Tomas Granada! I can't believe it--
you stealing my chickens. And I thought you were
my son's friend.

TOMAS: No, no, Mr. Lim...

(Narcisso comes into the circle of Lim's flashlight)

NARCISSO: Yes, Mr. Lim, I caught him trying to steal your
chickens. I was fighting to stop him.

TOMAS: That's not true.

NARCISSO: He made believe that he was going to guard your
chickens but he only wanted an opportunity to be
alone to steal them himself.

TOMAS: Please, Mr. Lim, Tim knows that the boys and I were
guarding the chickens for you because no one else
would. Narcisso is the one stealing your chickens.

LIM: (confused) Now I don't know who to believe.

TIM: (coming into the yard) Oh, Dad, you must believe
Toms. All the boys were here tonight keeping watch,
even though their fathers would be angry if they
found out. You must believe Toms.

LIM: Well...

TOMAS: (walks around unhappily, until he finds a bag)
Hala, look what I found--Narcisso's burlap bag,
with string inside to tie the chickens' legs
together.

TIM: See, Father,

NARCISSO: No, no, Tomas stole that from me. He was the one,
he was the one.

LIM: I can't prove you stole my chickens, Narcisso, but
I know in my heart that it is true. Tomas has always
been a good friend to my son. You have not.

NARCISSO: But...

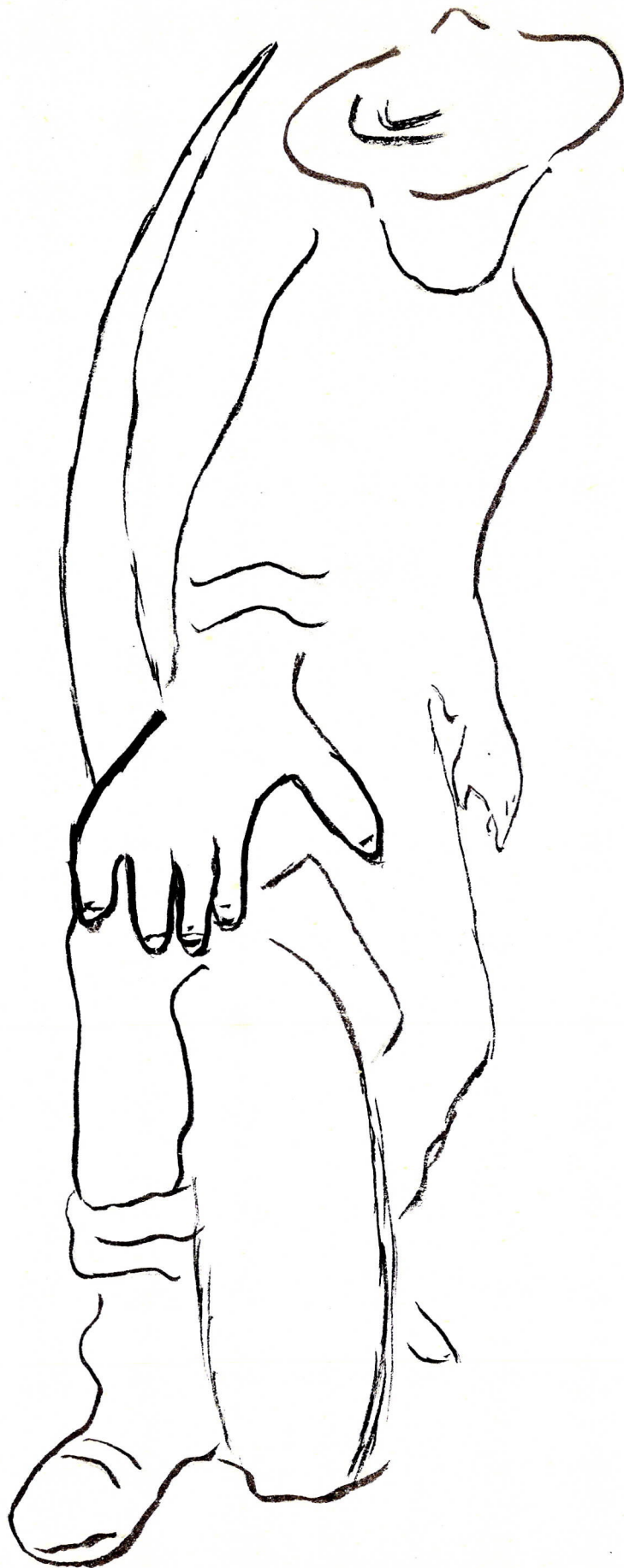
LIM: I could take you into court and make you tell the truth, but what good would that do? Your father, a good man when sober, would beat you. Maybe you need a good beating. I'm afraid though, in his anger, he would beat you too hard. Just go, now. Get away from my sight. You are like the snake who has no backbone. I think you fear your father enough not to steal any more chickens.

(Narcisso walks away with head down)

TM: Oh, Tomas, I knew you didn't take the chickens.

LIM: Tomas (smiling) you are not an angel and never will be an angel--your father should whack you on the head for wandering so late--but I thank you.

TOMAS: (also smiling) I'll go now. Hey, Tim, tomorrow we'll ride the truck, huh? See you then.



A GIANT IN THE BARRIO

(Early evening in front of Flora's)

DIGUS: It's going to be another dark night tonight.
The moon is hiding behind the clouds.

INDAY: A good time for the giant to attack.

TOMAS: Ah, Inday, you are so tough and you believe
in giants?

FLORA: And why shouldn't she, brave young Granada.
During the last harvest, on a night like
this, the giant hit Tatay on the head and
almost killed him.

PESIANG: Oh, I'm afraid of the giant.

TOMAS: Never mind, Pesiang. Teo Bersaluna said
someone was trying to steal the money he
hides in his hat.

OLD GRANDMOTHER: Teo Bersaluna is a good teacher but he
doesn't know many things. His mother and I
were the best herbolarios in the barrio
twenty years ago. But when Teo came home
from college he made her stop. Sometimes an
education makes a man forget things.

TONY: Well, I'll not be the one to go walking
alone.

TOMAS: Ah, you are all cowards.

INDAY: If you are so brave, Toms, why don't you
go along the road to Lumbog?

PEDIE: Sure, Toms, go ahead. Remember, there are no
houses to light your way.

DIGUS: Never mind, Toms. You don't have to do it.

FLORA: Quiet, Digus. If Toms does not believe in the giant, then he will enjoy the walk to Lumbog.

PESANG: Oh, no, no, Toms. Please don't go.

ALE: I'll tell Tay and he'll be very angry.

RAMIE: (younger brother) My brother is not afraid of anything. You'd better not tell Father, Ale. You will go, Toms, won't you?

TOMAS: (a little sorry he spoke so bravely, but forced to say yes) Yes, of course I'll go.

NARCISSO: How will we know that you don't hide behind the first bamboo tree and pretend you're going to Lumbog.

TOMS: Maybe, Narcisso, you would like to follow behind to make sure I go?

NARCISSO: Not I.

INDAY: Hoy, Narcisso, you would be the one to hide, not Toms.

NARCISSO: You speak too loudly for a Filipina. Maybe you think you are an Americana?

INDAY: I'll say anything I please.

FLORA: Hush, now, we don't want to forget that Tomas is going to be brave tonight.

TOMAS: (getting up hesitantly) I'll go now.
(Pesiang starts to cry) Pesiang, don't cry. No giant lives in the Philippines. Only in China are there giants.

(Tomas walks slowly, whistling to cover up his fear. He stops every few seconds to look around and listen. He takes out a handkerchief and wipes his brow. He does not see Inday and Digus following behind. They are very frightened, but are more curious than afraid. Actually, Inday is the one pulling Digus along).

TOMAS: There are no giants in the Philippines. There are no giants in the Philippines. There are...
(a sudden noise behind a coconut tree makes him stop) . Hoy, who is that? (Inday hides her head in her arms. Digs covers his mouth with his hand.) Who is that behind the tree? I'm not afraid of you. I won't let you kill me. I'm only fifteen years old. (more softly) Besides, I haven't got any money. (courageously walks toward tree, shouting) I'll fight you with my bare hands. I'll rip you apart. I'll...

(Inday screams as a huge thing comes from behind the tree...and then, stumbling and half-blind comes poor, old, crazy Benito, shuffling past without even seeing Tomas)

TOMAS: Benito...it's just poor old Benito (breathes a deep sigh of relief) Inday? Was that you who screamed?

INDAY: Yes, Tomas.

TOMAS: Ah, girls are always afraid.

DIGUS: Tomas, you were afraid, too.

TOMAS: That's not true.

INDAY: Tomas?

TOMAS: Well...

INDAY: You were afraid, Toms. But don't worry, we won't tell anyone. I think you were very brave.

TOMAS: Ah, well, didn't I tell you there weren't any giants.

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BACK TO SCHOOL

(The boys are sitting around Flora's drinking tuba)

- PEDIE: Whee! Let's have another drink to celebrate my first paycheck from old Miana! (everybody drinks)
- DIGUS: I feel like ringing the school bell twelve times.
- SOTERO: Go ahead and ring it.
- TIM: Maybe we'd better not.
- TONY: Oh come on, Tim, tonight we're going to have some fun. Hey, Narcisso, we're feeling so good we'll even let you drink with us.
- NARCISSO: My golly, you're real sports tonight. (takes tuba although he is uncomfortable with the boys)
- PEDIE: Hey, Toms, should we go down to the graveyard?
- TOMAS: We did that last week.
- DIGUS: We could take the pump handle from the well and hide it.
- TOMAS: We did that two weeks ago.
- SOTERO: We could serenade Lolita.
- TOMAS: She doesn't like our songs. She only wants to hear the Watusi.
- TIM: Sus, Tomas, we've done everything already. There's nothing else to do.
- TOMAS: (unhappily) I know.
- TEO: (walking in among the group) Well, aren't you boys a wonderful sight, wasting your time, drunk and not accomplishing anything.
- NARCISSO: What's your suggestion, teacher?
- ISIONG: Yes, Teo, what would you have them do. Even with Miana's shop, there's only part-time work.

with the

TEO: Isiong, it's important for Tomas and all the boys to finish their education, instead of sitting around here all the time. You have to let Tomas come back now before it's too late.

ISIONG: Tomas is my eldest boy. He's big, he's strong and he can help me in the fields. Why should I let you have him for one whole year?

FLORA: A fifth grade education is not so bad, Teodoro.

LOLITA: Sure, a big boy like him would look silly around the other kids.

TEO: Narcisso's father is letting him return (Narcisso makes a face to show that this decision did not please him). Ah, but you all don't understand. Give the boy a chance, Isiong, a better chance than you had. He was an honor student in fifth grade.

NARCISSO: Sus, who wants to go back to school.

INDAY: Do you want to be a fool all your life, Narcisso?

LOLITA: One year won't make him a professor, Day.

OLD GRANDMOTHER:
Farmers need strong backs. No matter if they have weak minds. Never met a smart man in my life anyway.

TOMAS: Now, Granny, Serapion, your son, is one of the biggest landowners in the town.

GRANNY: Doesn't mean he's smart. He's only got the devil on his side, that's all.

TEO: Well now, Isiong, what about Tomas?

ISIONG: Tomas, do you want to go back?

TOMAS: No, Tay...

SIONG: See, Teo.

TOMAS: No, I don't want to go, father, but if you will let me, I'll finish.

LOLITA: I pity the poor 6th grade teacher.

ISING: I don't understand, Tomas. Now you are free to wander for hours. If you go back to school you'll have to study.

NARCISO: Sus, Tomas, who cares about long division or Emilio Aguinaldo.

INDAY: You'll never care, Narciso. You're the one who knows everything anyway. I'm glad you're going, Toms.

TOMAS: (smiling) Why? So I won't play tricks on you anymore? Ah, Tay, I don't like school very much. And I know it will be hard for you to work the fields without me. But Mr. Bersaluna is an educated man and he has done much for our barrio. Maybe someday...

LOLITA: Maybe never, Tomas Granada.

INDAY: Your mouth is like a lemonsita, Lolita. It squirts out bitterness.

FLORA: Girls, don't interfere.

TEO: Classes start a week from today, boys.

ISING: Teodoro, I respect you. I hope you know what you are doing.



(The boys are, as usual, sitting in front of Flora's, with the exception that Tomas is carrying books under his arm).

- TONY: So, Toms, did you get 100% on the Tagalog exam?
- TOMAS: Never mind, it was a terrible test.
- NARCISSO: I'm glad I didn't study. What's the use of my knowing Tagalog when I live in the Visayas.
- TOMAS: I thought you expected to be a big man in Manila in the next few years.
- INDAY: The only place he could be a big man would be in first grade.
- NARCISSO: Many thanks, Day. What would I ever do without you?
- TEO: You boys got very interesting grades in the test today.
- TOMAS: Sir, I did my best, but that was a tough test.
- TEO: You had a respectable grade, Tomas. But I was very interested in your paper, Narcisso.
- NARCISSO: Why is that?
- TEO: For someone who bragged that he didn't study, you had the same answers as Tomas.
- NARCISSO: Uh, I remembered the material you gave in class.
- INDAY: When did you start paying attention in class?
- TEO: Narcisso, you copied your answers from Tomas.
- NARCISSO: Alright, so I did. What happens now.
- TOMAS: Narcisso, I wasn't happy about going back to school, but I swallowed it down, because I knew it was the right thing to do. Ever since you've come to class, you've made it difficult for anyone who wants to learn something. Sus, none of us is a genius, but we've got to get something into our thick heads.

TEO: Perhaps the best thing for you to do, Narcisso, is sit in the sun in front of Flora's every day until you get married and your wife supports you.

INDAY: Who'd want to marry him?

TOMAS: You know, sir, as soon as I'm finished, I'm going back to Miana's and work my way through high school. My father is a veteran and I can get my tuition paid for college. Maybe it's possible that I won't be a loafer the rest of my life.

DIGUS: What about the gang, Toms?

TOMAS: I'll tell you what, fellas, when I'm back in the barrio running my own furniture factory, I'll give you all a job. Sige? You, too, Narcisso, if you ever learn the trade.

(The whole cast assembles in front of Flora's)

I guess I'm going to be civilized, like it or not. See you in five years. I've got a lot of studying to do.

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